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ABSTRACT

The linguistic situation of the Mexican-American community is complex, involving multiglossia and multilingualism. Various language codes and different blendings of English and Spanish are in use within the community. Educators should decide which code they will use in their planning. Research is needed to consider the various codes and their roles and relationships to improve the educational system for the Mexican American. (VM)

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CHICANO MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTIGLOSSIA

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CHICANO MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTIGLOSSIA

Among social scientists and educators it is virtually axiomatic that the Mexican American population is both "bilingual" and "bi-cultural," yet such an axiom has not yet been subject to any intensive scrutiny or questioning. It has generally been taken for granted and then one goes on from there, to conduct one's study of social stratification, the school dropout problem, police-community relations, or whatever else happens to interest the scholar. Yet such an axiom should be scrutinized, for upon further examination, Chicano "bilingualism" turns out not to be so much an established fact, as an extremely problematic field for research; virtually unexplored in any depth at all. True, there is bilingualism among Chicanos, but what is its extent? What is its nature? In what social contexts and for what purposes are the various linguistic codes[1] used? What are the educational and other social consequences? We do not yet have sufficient data to answer these questions; still it would seem useful to map out our area of concern through a rather cursory examination of Chicano multilingualism and multiglossia[2] as they might appear from the perspective of current sociolinguistic theory.

Diglossia and Bilingualism

One of the peculiarities of traditional concern with bilingualism has been the viewing of it as an abnormal phenomenon, or at least a temporary one, in the "normal" type of society ordinarily envisioned by sociologists of the structural-functional persuasion. Gumperz has pointed out the fact that total bi-or multi-lingualism is the rule rather than the exception in a wide variety of societies.[3] Chicano society

(or culture, or subculture) is certainly then in this respect neither abnormal nor unusual. And inasmuch as the situation has persisted for more than a century and is still in full vigor, it is certainly not a mere temporary phenomenon which will be disappearing in the near future.

Before we proceed any further, the important distinction between bilingualism and diglossia must be made. (Below, reasons will be given for preferring the terms multilingualism and multiglossia in their stead). For the concept diglossia we are indebted to Ferguson, who coined the term to refer to situations where either two varieties of the same language or two different languages are coextensively used in the same society, i.e. one colloquial variety (or varieties) for everyday affairs, and one more respected variety used for writing and formal affairs, as for example, colloquial and classical Arabic, katharevousa and dhimotiki in Greece or Yiddish and Hebrew in traditional Eastern European Jewish culture.[4] In such societies, some individuals may be bilingual in the two languages, but others are monolingual colloquial speakers. Since Ferguson's pioneer formulation however, sociolinguists have come to accept the idea that diglossia exists not only in multilingual societies which officially recognize several languages, but, also, in societies which are multilingual in the sense that they employ separate dialects or other functionally differentiated codes or language varieties in different social settings.[5]

Thus the concept "diglossia" refers to the recognition and acceptance of different forms of speech within a given society, and "bilingualism" refers to the linguistic behavior of individuals within that society.

As Fishman puts it, "Bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic behavior whereas diglossia is a characterization of linguistic organization at the socio-cultural level."[6] A further distinction has been made by Kloss who suggests that we use the term "in-diglossia" to refer to a relationship between closely related languages, and "out-diglossia" to refer to a relationship between languages not closely related.[7]

Applying the concepts just discussed it would seem that in the Chicano community, we can recognize both in-diglossia and out-diglossia. Thus, with reference to Spanish we can identify the use both of standard Mexican Spanish as well as of that variety of Spanish characteristic of the peasantry and lower class of Mexico. As far as English is concerned, there is the use both of colloquial English and of standard English. Thus we have in-diglossia with reference to each of the two languages, but we also have out-diglossia because English and Spanish is each used by the Chicano in its own spheres. The term "complex diglossia" is suggested to describe those societies such as the Chicano, which are characterized by both in-diglossia and out-diglossia.

With reference to bilingualism on the other hand there is the question of its definition, and the nature of the types or forms in which it occurs. At the present time there appears to be a general consensus among sociolinguists that anyone is bilingual who can produce meaningful utterances in more than one language. Hence bilingualism manifests itself in a range of degrees, from complete, symmetrical native control of two languages, to the asymmetrical case, where there is extreme weakness in one of the two languages. In this sense, then virtually all Chicanos are bilingual; it still remains an empirical question to what degree they are so. Whatever tentative answers to

this question can be mustered in the near future should be of enormous practical significance particularly to those professionally concerned with the education of the Mexican American student. Perhaps the most significant variables with which they are dealing are the ones least clearly understood; i.e. the range and dimensions of multilingualism.

The compound-coordinate distinction is a useful one. Compound bilinguals are those who learned both languages in a bilingual home or neighborhood or one language through the medium of another, hence have fused two meaning systems; coordinate bilinguals, having learned their two languages in different contexts, have somewhat different meanings for corresponding words in the two languages. In the Chicano case, we would be interested in the potentially different effects in this connection of a child being reared in a home where Spanish only was spoken as opposed to a home where both languages were used on a more or less equal basis. One might speculate that the compound bilingual Chicano child might miss some of the subtleties of the English used in his school, while the coordinate bilingual might avoid this type of difficulty. There appears to be a general tendency, for coordinate bilingualism to shift to compound bilingualism, although formal education can help to keep the two semantic systems distinct if only one language is used at a time. The planning of bilingual education programs which ignores these distinctions may be imperilling the very success of these programs. For example, the question as to whether both languages shall be used in the same time period to discuss the same subject, or whether only one language is to be used in a given time period should be settled, taking into consideration sociolinguistic as well as administrative factors.

Perhaps the relationship of linguistic to sociocultural variables might profitably be explored by utilizing the concepts of "compound biculturals" and "coordinate biculturals." Thus, for example, perhaps Mexican immigrants become bicultural in coordinate fashion, while most barrio residents become enculturated in such a fashion that they are bicultural in compound fashion. It may very well be that those who are compound bilinguals are also compound biculturals, the same being true for the coordinate. In any case, the relationship between the two sets of variables seems worth some exploration. This is not a new idea. Soffietti has suggested the term "cultural accents," to refer to conflicting habit patterns persistently interfering with each other and resulting in any number of distortions or outright substitutions.[8] Again the practical implications are obvious. Are we interested in bicultural education or are we trying to blend two cultures into one?

Types of Codes

Whether different varieties of speech are languages, dialects, or whatever, depends not on linguistic grounds, but on sociopolitical considerations. Thus as indicated above we would prefer to avoid the spurious language - dialect distinction and use the more neutral term "code." Determination of the varieties of speech or codes in the Chicano community must be based in part on an examination of its social structure and in part on perceptions and attitudes of community members. This topic still remains virtually unexplored more than two decades after Barker's pioneering Tucson study.[9] Barker identified three varieties of Spanish spoken in Tucson and these would seem to be fairly common elsewhere in the Southwest. They are (1) Standard Mexican Spanish, the language spoken by educated persons in Mexico

(2) Rural-lower-class Mexican Spanish spoken in Mexico by the uneducated, and which Barker identifies, too narrowly in my opinion, as "Southern Arizona Dialect of Spanish" (3) Youth argot, often called "Pachuco" dialect. It seems, tentatively, at least that a fourth language variety could be added, one which in certain loci or for certain purposes may be the predominant one, and which has no widely recognized name, but which conveniently might be called "pochismos," i.e. speaking with pochismos. Estelle Chacón suggests (somewhat facetiously) that pochismos might be defined in the United States as "an unpredictable scattering of Spanish words and phrases used throughout an English conversation," and that Mexicans might define it as precisely the opposite.[10] (My own thinking is that the scattering is systematic, not random, and that much systematic scattering could indeed be predicted from social and psychological variables, had we the necessary data.) Chacón claims,"It is my mother tongue."[11] A very important theoretical point is raised here. Is "pochismos" Spanish with English interference, English with Spanish interference, simple code switching, all of these, or a separate code that can properly be said to act as "mother tongue?"[12]

Certainly "pochismos" merits careful study in view of its very importance to the entire Mexican American population. The practical implications are no less significant than the theoretical ones. Educators might ponder the feasibility of trilingual education. For example, the poetry of Alurista, who writes in this code, has found an exceptionally favorable emotional and intellectual response among Chicano intellectuals, students, and activists (these three categories are not mutually exclusive, of course). There seems to be continuum from interference to code switching. When does interference become code

switching: When a word from the other language is introduced? a phrase? a sentence? a paragraph? any utterance? Whatever the conceptualization, observers from both north and south of the border have noted the large amount of code switching among Chicanos. A possible explanation derives from an observation of Weinreich: Abnormal proneness to switching has been attributed to persons who, in their early childhood, were addressed by the same familiar interlocutors indiscriminately in both languages.[13] Apparently at a later age, however, the person has no difficulty communicating with other persons reared similarly, and even extreme interference will not lessen intelligibility.

Now what about the Chicano child? Does he speak with pochismos, if he does so, was it because he was addressed by his parents and/or barrio chums indiscriminately in both English and Spanish, or addressed by such interlocutors in pochismos, in all three, or perhaps in pochismos and only one of the other two codes? Certainly the range of variation to be found in Mexican American communities in this regard is deserving of serious research. Equally significant are the possible social psychological correlates of such linguistic behavior. Hymes suggests that unless the roles and settings of the languages are kept distinct, the child may develop personality difficulties.[14] Lambert notes that students "who face an unresolved conflict of cultural allegiances are held back in their progress in both languages."[15] Attitudes towards one's own ethnic group or a different one are believed to be strong predictors in success or failure in learning the language of each group. Thus the success of bilingual education for the Chicano, at least as far as the mastery of Spanish and English is concerned, is likely to be heavily dependent on the student's attitudes toward the majority culture and their own.

In this connection it should be noted that the Chicano is not really a marginal man so much as he is part of a marginal culture, neither Mexican nor American. As directly implied above, the linguistic marginality is also salient. "Pocho" may well be the "mother tongue" in this marginal culture. When bilinguals interact primarily with bilinguals, they reinforce bilingual behavior as well as strengthen their marginal culture. As Homans notes, "the more frequently persons interact with each other, the more alike in some respects both their activities and their sentiments tend to become."[16] Thus also Ervin-Tripp concludes that where bilinguals have been interacting mainly with other bilinguals for a long time the model for each of their languages is not monolingual usage of these languages but rather the languages as spoken by the bilinguals themselves.[17] This last statement raises some interesting questions. While the barrio Chicano's model for English may be the English of his barrio peers, is the model for his Spanish the speech of his peers or the speech of his parents? On the other hand the models for "pochismos" and "pachuco" are most likely to be the speech of his peers for when bilinguals communicate primarily with bilinguals, linguistic interference is likely to be very high in both languages.

At this point it should be obvious that indeed what we have in the Chicano community is not a simple case of diglossia and bilingualism, but rather a case of multiglossia and multilingualism, with very complex relationships among the half-dozen codes in use among Chicanos. Which of these codes do educators for example wish to take into account in their planning? At the very least, if we insist on a simplistic definition of bilingual education, we should be fully aware of what we are doing.

Choice of Code

An emergent sociolinguistics of the Chicano would need to identify the different contexts or "registers" in which codes available to Chicanos are used, and attempt to ascertain the conventions and social psychological factors which determine the use of which codes in which registers. There is in principle no difference whether we are talking about in-diglossia or out-diglossia. As Gumperz remarks, "The same social pressures which would lead a monolingual to change from colloquial to formal or technical types may lead a bilingual to shift from one language to another."[18]

To a certain extent diglossia exists in both the U.S. among the English-speaking, and in Mexico among the Spanish-speaking, in the sense of that one code is used in the schools and usually a different one in the home and neighborhood, i.e. standard vs. folk (or colloquial). In each case the situation is therefore one of in-diglossia. For the Chicano child, however, the situation is usually one of out-diglossia. As Barker explains it, "Young children do not learn formal Spanish at home. Instead, at the age when they ordinarily would be learning formal Spanish, they go to school and learn formal English. For many children English thus becomes identified with most types of formal relationships."[19] If the student decides to study Spanish in high school he is faced with a different type of problem. In high school his Spanish teacher (frequently an Anglo) tells him the Spanish he learned at home is not "good" Spanish, with the implication that his parents are uneducated and illiterate peasants. Chicano students consequently become demoralized. The result? With a small percentage of brilliant exceptions, Anglos get better grades in Spanish classes

than Chicanos. Defeating the student thus on his home ground is a particularly insidious method of demonstrating the cultural "inferiority" of the Mexican American student. The teacher who is party to such a fraud is ignorant not only of linguistics and social structure, but also of his educational responsibilities to his students. Further clarification of Chicano multilingualism and multiglossia is indeed urgent if educators are realistically to plan with the Chicano community for the education of the Chicano student. These phenomena must be made clear to the teacher himself, and he must make them clear to his students, so there will be mutual respect for the different varieties of speech and their speakers. At the same time students should be learning or improving those varieties of speech (codes) which will be needed or useful in the different life situations in which they will be finding themselves and for which their education is supposedly preparing them.

FOOTNOTES

1. By "codes" are meant languages, dialects, or other varieties of speech.

2. Because I believe more than two codes are in use among Chicanos, I prefer the prefix "multi-" to the prefix "bi-" in discussing our linguistic situation.

3. John Gumperz, "Types of Linguistic Communities" Anthropological Linguistics IV (1962), pp. 22-40.

4. Charles A. Ferguson, "Diglossia" Word XV (1959), pp. 325-340.

5. A more acceptable term than "multilingual" would be "multicodal." Despite its greater conceptual clarity however, I refuse to add to the already overburdened repertoire of sociological jargon.

6. Joshua A. Fishman, "Bilingualism with and without Diglossia; Diglossia with and without Bilingualism" Journal of Social Issues XXIII, No. 2 (April 1967), pp. 29-38.

7. Heinz Kloss, "Types of Multilingual Communities: A Discussion of Ten Variables" Sociological Inquiry XXXVI, No. 2 (Spring 1966), pp. 132-145.

8. James P. Soffietti, "Bilingualism and Biculturalism" Journal of Educational Psychology XLVI (1955) pp. 222-227.

9. George Barker, "Social Functions of Language in a Mexican American Community" Acta Americana V (July - September 1947), pp. 185-202.

10. Estelle Chacón, "Pochismos" El Grito III, No. 1 (Fall 1969), pp. 34-35.

11. Ibid.

12. Linguistic interference is the "tendency for the phonological, lexical, and semantic systems of one language to intrude on those of another." (John McNamara "The Bilingual's Linguistic Performance" Journal of Social Issues XXIII, No. 2 (April 1967) pp. 58-77. Code switching is "The constant alternating in discourse between two languages" (Daniel N. Cárdenas "Dominant Spanish Dialects Spoken in the United States" Washington, D.C., ERIC, 1970, p. 43).

13. Uriel Weinreich, Languages in Contact (New York: Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953), p. 74.

14. Dell H. Hymes, "The Ethnography of Speaking" in Anthropology and Human Behavior (Washington, D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1962), pp. 15-53.

15. W.E. Lambert, et al. "A Study of the Roles of Attitudes and Motivations in Second-Language Learning" pp. 473-549 in Joshua A. Fishman, ed., Readings in the Sociology of Language (The Hague: Mouton, 1968).

16. George L. Homans, The Human Group. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950).

17. Susan Ervin-Tripp, "An Issei Learns English" Journal of Social Issues XXIII, No. 2 (April 1967), pp. 78-90.

18. John Gumperz, "On the Linguistic Markers of Bilingual Communication," Journal of Social Issues XXIII, No. 2 (April 1967), pp. 48-57.

19. Barker, loc. cit.